

## Community resources

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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 09ATHENS997, Anarchists and Universities in Athens: XXXXXXXXXXXX Telling

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09ATHENS997**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09ATHENS997	2009-06-16 08:32	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Athens

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.tanea.gr>

O R 160832Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0287  
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 000997

FOR EUR/PPD, EUR/SE AND ECA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/06/16  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [GR](#)  
SUBJECT: Anarchists and Universities in Athens: XXXXXXXXXXXX Telling Tale

REF: ATHENS 191, ATHENS 260, ATHENS 348

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

1. (C) Summary: University of Athens XXXXXXXXXXXX told PAO and CAO on June 9 that student discontent with the Greek educational system, the economy, and lack of jobs, has led to increased violence even among traditionally mainstream student groups. He complained about preferred police tactics to round up and contain troublemakers within university grounds in order to limit damage to Athens city streets and shops, as a cowardly approach sanctioned by politicians. XXXXXXXXXXXX has taken it upon himself to negotiate directly with student protesters in order to limit damage to the university, something he says suits the police and GOG authorities just fine. He lamented the GOG's "lost opportunity" in 2004 to make substantial changes to the education system, including abolishing university asylum and allowing for private universities. End summary.

12. (C) In a no-holds-barred meeting on June 9 where he criticized equally political parties, the police, and student troublemakers for increasingly violent protests that have destroyed university property and sent him the hospital eight times XXXXXXXXXXXX, University of Athens XXXXXXXXXXXX warned that student disappointment with the educational system and the economy is on the rise. As XXXXXXXXXXXX targeted during the violent student protests of last December, XXXXXXXXXXXX has experienced a ratcheting up of student extremism that does not bode well for the future, he said. In the past six years alone, the number of anarchists in the University of Athens student body has risen from 450 to 5,000, XXXXXXXXXXXX said. The anarchists have even founded a political party that participated in the recent EU Parliamentary elections, which managed to garner 7,000 votes in the greater Athens area. Of the 180 first-year medical students (which traditionally are the crC(me de la crC(me of the student body), one-third voted for the anarchist party in the recent student elections. This means, according to XXXXXXXXXXXX, that there are severe educational and social problems that can only be addressed via a permanent bipartisan parliamentary committee and a permanent Deputy Minister of Education who are willing to go beyond party politics to implement badly-needed reforms.

13. (C) According to XXXXXXXXXXXX, Greece has an inordinately high number of college attendees (approximately 70% of Greek high school graduates attend university), who cannot be absorbed into the work force once they complete their degrees. XXXXXXXXXXXX; he stated that Greece has a total of 65,000 doctors where only half that number is needed. The educational system needs to be restructured, XXXXXXXXXXXX declared, to provide for more extensive and high-quality vocational and technical education opportunities. Without these changes, Greece will continue to graduate a growing contingent of unemployable, and increasingly disenfranchised, young people.

14. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX lamented the GOG's lost opportunity to implement educational reforms in the summer of 2004, following the heady success of the Athens Olympics. He had proposed to then-Minister of Education, Marietta Giannakou, five amendments to the basic law on education that would have solved key issues such as university asylum and the licensing of private universities. XXXXXXXXXXXX said that Giannakou had taken these proposals on board; however, at the last minute she decided to open up a wide-ranging dialogue on reform instead, which XXXXXXXXXXXX declared was the impetus for students to organize and oppose proposed changes to the educational system, and also caused the opposition PASOK party to withdraw its support for the proposed reforms. This was the birth for the student protests we are experiencing today, XXXXXXXXXXXX concluded.

15. (C) Regarding the events in December 2008, XXXXXXXXXXXX said that the police confined the violent protesters to the main University of Athens building, leaving XXXXXXXXXXXX and members of the academic community to negotiate with them - which eventually happened. XXXXXXXXXXXX (under law asylum can be revoked during acts of violence, which would have given police the right to enter university grounds, stop the violence and arrest protesters). XXXXXXXXXXXX. However, XXXXXXXXXXXX complained, the police - in agreement with the GOG - continue to prefer to corral protesters onto university grounds during protests, where damage can be limited to university property alone instead of Athens city streets and shops. Student demonstrations pass through the Athens in front of the police, which start shooting tear gas at the demonstrators only when they near campus grounds. In cases where police involvement on university grounds is warranted, rectors have been turned into scapegoats who must approve any and all police entry, even if it is to investigate petty crimes such as break-ins.

16. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX predicted even more student strife if the government attempts to abolish university asylum. He described a meeting he had with student leaders XXXXXXXXXXXX, in which he announced that he was going to lift asylum so that the police could enter the campus to restore order. All student groups, with the exception of the student party affiliated with the governing New Democracy, stated that they would join the anarchists if he took this step. XXXXXXXXXXXX stated that in general his choice was to negotiate with students or let them burn the buildings down.

17. (C) Comment: XXXXXXXXXXXX was extremely candid in his criticism of all Greek political parties for their lack of leadership, with the police for their tactics, and with students for channeling their unhappiness into negative outbursts of violence. He was equally candid during the December riots when he went on TV to respond to some politicians' accusations that he was partially to blame for the inability to control student protesters. XXXXXXXXXXXX seems truly disheartened by what he sees as a negative trend in Greece on student violence, and appears to be longing for the days when he can return to his XXXXXXXXXXXX (out of which he has published three papers in "Nature.") XXXXXXXXXXXX ruefully said that, if he were to write a guide XXXXXXXXXXXX, study at the War School and attendance at Crisis Management classes would be at the top of his recommended "to-do" list.

SPECKHARD